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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DUSHANBE 000862

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/10/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: SCA A/S BOUCHER, NSC MILLARD MEET FM NAZAROV, DISCUSS SCO, SOUTH ASIA, UNSC, ELECTIONS

REF: STATE 72746

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher and NSC Senior Director Elisabeth Millmetwith Tajik Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov May 18. Boucher delivered the reftel demarche on countering attempts to use the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to push U. S. and Western coalition forces out of the region. Nazarov supported the U.S. position. Boucher and Nazarov also discussed Tajikistan's policy of balancing Pakistan and India. Nazarov dismissed reports India would send military aircraft to Tajikistan's Ayni Airbase. Nazarov requested Guatemala send a diplomatic note stating its case to win the U.N. Security Council seat. Nazarov agreed the November presidential election needs to be fair and transparent, but was non-committal on registering U.S. democracy NGOs National Democratic Institute and Internews. END SUMMARY.

NAZAROV AGREES WITH U.S. ON SCO'S ROLE

¶2. (C) The Assistant Secretary delivered reftel talking points to Foreign Minister Talkbak Nazarov May 8. Nazarov indicated he understood the United State's position on the SCO and agreed that if a military policy or structure were to emerge from the SCO, it would not be constructive for the region or broader international community. Under the current framework, the SCO cooperates on matters of extremism, counter-terrorism, and counter-narcotics. He said thus far he has been satisfied with

the statements issued from the SCO - except for the 2005 communique suggesting Western military forces establish a timetable for leaving the region - and views the organization as a positive instrument for regional cooperation. Mainly, Tajikistan has been concerned with border disputes with China, where SCO has proven to be helpful. Tajikistan hopes the SCO will move toward cooperation on infrastructure development and economic and cultural issues. Nazarov understood that the United States has a critical role to play in the region's economic development.

¶ 13. (C) Tajikistan supports Afghanistan's observer status in SCO, Nazarov said, and pointed out that if the SCO was veering off in a direction that would be hostile to the United States, then India and Pakistan would likely not continue as official observers. Nazarov said he had not yet seen a draft communique for the upcoming SCO summit meeting or any other draft documents, for that matter. He said he expects the "jubilee summit" to lack substance. President Rahmonov will attend the June 14-15 summit in Shanghai.

¶ 14. (C) The Assistant Secretary requested Nazarov keep the United States informed on developments leading up to the June SCO summit, and to exercise Tajikistan's influence to ensure the SCO sticks to its original purpose of cooperation in economic spheres. He re-emphasized hopes the SCO would not diverge into activity that would be unhelpful to regional cooperation. The Assistant Secretary also expressed hope that Afghanistan would be able to join the SCO and other regional cooperative groups.

TAJIKISTAN BALANCES ITS SOUTH ASIAN POWER RELATIONS

¶ 15. (C) Nazarov stated India is only assisting to rebuild Tajikistan's Ayni Airbase, but does not plan a permanent

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presence. Tajikistan had just sent a diplomatic note to Pakistan reassuring the Pakistani government media reports India would send planes to the base are false. At a recent meeting with President Musharaf, President Rahmonov welcomed Pakistan's support to "rebuild any of Tajikistan's other dilapidated airbases."

¶ 16. (C) In efforts not to offend either country or show favoritism, Tajikistan balances Pakistan and India scrupulously and treats both equally. Last year, President Rahmonov visited Pakistan and promised he would in turn visit India in August ¶ 2006. Tajikistan made sure to open its consulates and embassies as well as announce envoys to Pakistan and India on exactly the same day.

¶ 17. (C) Both Pakistan and India are important economically to Tajikistan. Both can serve as a potential market for Tajikistan's hydropower in the long term. Nazarov said that Tajikistan wants to be able to cross through Pakistan into India, because India is the bigger market opportunity.

¶ 18. (C) The Assistant Secretary sympathized with Tajikistan and explained that the United States has similar sensitivities when it comes to balancing Pakistan and India, although we see and treat each as distinctly separate relationships. He expressed hope Tajikistan can maintain its good relationship with both countries, because both can provide development assistance and be strategic economic partners for Tajikistan.

¶ 19. SBU) The Assistant Secretary delivered the invitation to the Istanbul regional electricity conference. Nazarov said he would consider going, if his travel schedule permits.

NAZAROV REQUESTS DIPNOTE FROM GUATEMALA FOR UNSC VOTE

¶ 10. (C) The Assistant Secretary encouraged Tajikistan to vote for Guatemala as a member of the Security Council, rather than Venezuela, and express its support for Guatemala prior to the vote. Nazarov requested that Guatemala send the government of Tajikistan a diplomatic note requesting support, either directly

to Dushanbe or via its UN Mission.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

¶11. (C) The Assistant Secretary commented to Nazarov that democracy is a continually evolving process, but the crucial part is to get the basics right and conduct a free and fair presidential election in November. He stressed the importance of giving all political parties and candidates equal access to the media, and the need for the government to seriously consider recommended changes to the presidential election law. Such improvements would be indicators of democratic progress. The Assistant Secretary recounted how Nazarbayev won the Kazakh presidential election with 92%, which most people find unbelievable. He said that Rahmonov should not be afraid of competitors because he is popular enough to win through an election that meets international standards. Reporting accurate election results would enhance Tajikistan's international reputation, "because it is more honorable to win by real numbers."

¶12. (C) Nazarov noted that both OSCE and the UN will soon send election needs assessment teams to Tajikistan. He then philosophized that Tajikistan's civil war had the effect of decreasing political activity because many still equate political contention with instability. Nevertheless, he said, as President Rahmonov has promised, the November election will

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be transparent. He added, "In the end, if you have only one candidate, it's not an election. Rahmonov shouldn't be afraid of competitors. He doesn't need an inflated final vote tally."

¶13. (C) The Assistant Secretary told Nazarov he was impressed nearly 3,000 NGOs are registered in Tajikistan. He requested the Foreign Minister's assistance in registering the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Internews. He explained that these two U.S. NGOs work openly and fairly with political parties across the spectrum to improve the democratic process.

¶14. (C) Nazarov seemed genuinely unaware of the internews re-registration problem. He took the Assistant Secretary's point but remained non-committal.

¶15. (C) After the meeting, MFA Director for Europe and the Americas Ismatullo Nasriddinov confided to Millard NDI and Internews are on the "black list" as agents fomenting "color revolutions." (NOTE: This is the Kremlin's position that dominates Tajikistan's Ministry of Security. END NOTE.) He added IFES works fully successfully in Tajikistan because from the beginning it took time to forge productive relationships with the government and, thus, is fully respected.

¶16. (U) The Assistant Secretary did not have an opportunity to clear this cable before departing Dushanbe.

HOAGLAND